

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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May 15, 1980**PRIMATES PRESS IRAN
IN WAKE OF KILLING**

NEW YORK -- The Archbishop of Canterbury and Presiding Bishop John M. Allin of the Episcopal Church are leading a growing chorus of concern for the lives of members of Iranian religious minorities in the wake of the murder of the son of the Anglican Bishop in Iran.

Bahram Dehqani-Tafti, 24, was ambushed and killed by gunfire May 6 as he drove home from the college at which he taught economics. His father, the Rt. Rev. H. B. Dehqani-Tafti, left Iran after gunmen broke into their home last fall and fired shots which wounded the Bishop's wife Margaret in the hand.

In late April, the bishop's secretary was shot and remains hospitalized.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Robert A. K. Runcie, has been in touch by telephone with Bishop Dehqani-Tafti in Cyprus, to express his deep sorrow and sympathy.

In his statement the Archbishop expressed his grief, shock and concern at what has occurred and asked for the prayers of the whole Anglican Communion and of Christians around the world.

He says that there had previously been assurances from the Iranian authorities that minority groups would be protected. In view of what has happened, the Archbishop is now asking Iran's President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr for fresh assurances that protection measures will be taken.

On the same day, Bishop Allin cabled his sympathy to Bishop Dehqani-Tafti and asked all bishops of the Episcopal Church to join in special prayers for the family and in sending cables to the President of Iran pleading "for your assurance that religious minorities will be protected in Iran."

The same plea was echoed by the governing board of the National Council of Churches which was meeting that week in Indianapolis. The board approved a message, initiated by the 16-member Episcopal Church delegation, which expressed sympathy to the family and concern for the members of Iran's religious minorities. The board called on the government in Iran "to exert its utmost effort to provide protection to members of religious minorities in Iran."

Concerned with possible repercussions between members of the two faiths, a Church official sought to reopen communication through the ranking Iranian diplomat left in the United States.

The Rev. Charles A. Cesaretti, public issues officer at the Church Center, made the plea in a letter to Mansour Farhang, chief of the Iran mission to the United Nations. Father Cesaretti was one of seven Christian leaders who spent 10 days in dialogue with Iranian officials last Christmas season. The visit was arranged through Ambassador Farhang's mediation.

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